

2015

Tracking Onslow: a community in transition. edition 6, mid 2015

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Tracking

a community in transition

edition 6, mid-2015

ONSLOW



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edition six

As far as I know, this is the final edition of Tracking Onslow. Back in 2012 a collaboration was born between Edith Cowan University and the Shire of Ashburton. We agreed to make a series of six magazines over three years in order to track the impact of the gas hubs on the Onslow community. The deal required an understanding on the part of the Shire that the journalism in the magazine would be independent. This magazine is not a PR tool for the shire, for Chevron, for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, or for any particular group in the community.

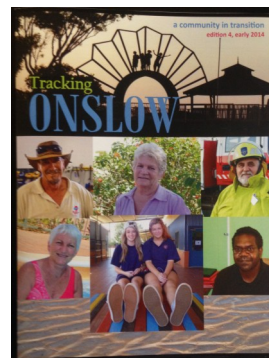
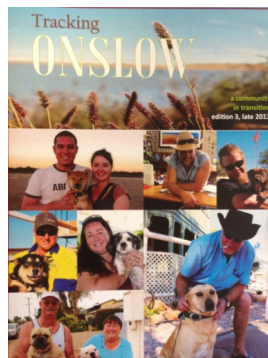
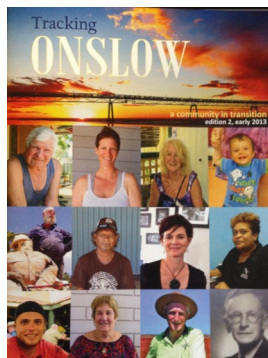
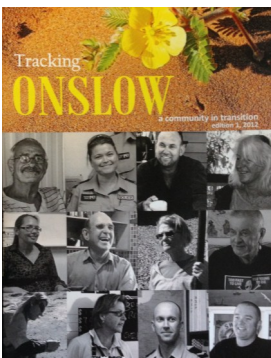
Our aim instead is to do the things that journalism ideally should do, and one of these is to function as a town square where everyone's views are shared, so that questions can be answered and issues debated. This means that if we speak to people who are critical of the Shire or Chevron or other groups then those views can be published here. We hope that in doing so we give all of the parties involved in shaping Onslow's future an opportunity to respond to each others' concerns.

Over the life of the project 19 ECU journalism students have worked on it and many of those are now working in the media industry. Overall, it's been fascinating to be a part of this turbulent time Onslow's story. We wish you all well and thank those of you who took the time to share your stories, perceptions, views and concerns.

Best wishes for a harmonious future,



Dr Kayt Davies
Edith Cowan University
Mid 2015



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Disclaimer:

In creating this magazine we made every effort to ensure that the information published here was correct at the time of publishing. Interviews were conducted in Onslow in June and July 2015. Some information was gathered in subsequent phone interviews and through other research processes. We apologise for any omissions.

Thanks to the Shire of Ashburton for funding airfares and accommodation in Onslow for this edition, and for respecting our need for editorial independence

Produced and printed by
Edith Cowan University
2 Bradford St,
Mt Lawley, WA, 6050.
CRICOS IPC 00279B



Show us the \$250 million

The people in Onslow are tired of promises. Big dollar figures have been bandied about since news of the gas hubs first came to town. The figure \$250 million is commonly quoted as the amount being spent on the community in connection with Chevron's Wheatstone LNG project and so we tried to track it down. Where is the money, what is it being spent on and when?

While the \$250m figure appears in Chevron, State Government and Shire documents, pinning down what it is being spent on is not an easy task. Most often the answer referred to a list of 24 projects that are in varying stages of development.

Asked for a list of figures that add up to \$250m, the Department of State Development (DSD) refused, explaining that not all listed projects have a public cost figure yet. We understand that price projections for future projects can be difficult, but we wondered where the total came from (if the figures that add up to it are unknown) and what will happen to the remainder if some projects are cancelled or completed under budget.

The \$250m is the sum of a list of numbers contained in a document called the "State Development Agreement" which is not publicly available as it is "commercial in confidence" (and not even members of parliament can access it).

The DSD, however, stressed that the \$250m is all coming from Chevron and that there is an additional \$70m in State Government spending earmarked for

Onslow. The list of 24 projects, published in December 2014, outlines delivery timelines for many of the Onslow projects. Announcing it, Premier and State Development Minister Colin Barnett pledged that most of the projects would be completed over the next three to four years, saying: "Almost a dozen State agencies are involved in delivering these projects to ensure that the Onslow community directly benefits from major nearby projects like the Wheatstone and [BHP Billiton's] Macedon."

The State Government, Shire of Ashburton, Chevron Australia and BHP Billiton are funding the 24 projects. The Shire is responsible for delivery of 11 of them, and the State Government for 13. The BHP Billiton contribution is \$5m for the skate park and basketball stadium.

Having watched the progress of the spending, some delays are evident. The swimming pool is listed on the December document as due for completion in late 2016. But according to Ashburton CEO Neil Hartley, it is now scheduled for construction between early-2016 and mid-2017. The basketball stadium and skate park have also moved forward from early-2015/mid-2015 to late-2015/mid-2016.

"a dozen State agencies are involved in delivering these projects to ensure that the Onslow community directly benefits from major nearby projects"



The table on the facing page was compiled using information on the DSD's December 2014 list of 24 projects.

It was updated and supplemented by information from the Shire of Ashburton, press releases, interviews and government websites. There are gaps in it, but it represents our best effort at finding out what is being spent in Onslow.

Bindi Gove from BHP Billiton said the company had been ready to spend the \$5m it has committed to that project for some time, and that the delays were to do with shire processes.

Ashburton Shire president Kerry White said perceptions that the pledged projects were behind schedule were unwarranted, as significant behind the scenes work had been done to scope, plan and cost them and other external factors had affected the delivery timeline for projects.

According to Mrs White, the projects are a high priority for the Onslow community, and the Shire is investing significant resources to see them delivered.

A spokesperson for the Department of State Development (DSD) said that the Shire of Ashburton and a number of State Government agencies were "working diligently to deliver more than 20 community and critical infrastructure projects for Onslow". The department is coordinating many of these projects. She added that five projects were completed between 2012 and 2014, and that two projects were completed this year.

The big ticket item Chevron is spending on is a power and desalination facility for which public costing is yet to be released, although according to the DSD 2013-14 annual report "engineering design and approvals for these projects are progressing and construction of the first stage (water storage tanks) is now underway". The report said that in addition to this project Chevron was contributing a "further \$121m" for infrastructure projects. The

spokesperson added that Chevron is contributing a further \$66m, which along with \$10m from Royalties for Regions funding, has been allocated for community projects being developed by the Shire. This \$66m is in addition to the previous \$121m. We calculate that if Chevron's spend is \$250m, and \$66m of that is for community projects and \$121 is for infrastructure projects; the power/desal plant seems to be costing at least \$63m, although the DSD would not confirm this figure. Chevron's media releases have said the company is funding both projects [power and desal] and that they will take Chevron's total contribution to more than \$250m.

In terms of the State Government spend, there is the \$10m of Royalties for Regions funding towards the Shire-run projects, as well as \$10m for the Cane River Borefield Upgrade and \$19.8m for the hospital also from Royalties for Regions; and the State Government pitched in \$13m towards the airport; bringing the visible government total to around \$53m. The DSD spokesperson said that "circa \$70m from the state government" was being spent, so there is \$17m of yet-to-be-made-public State Government funding presumably involved in the 24 projects.

While the \$250m+ from Chevron is clearly Wheatstone related, working out whether the Government's \$70m is specifically being given to Onslow because of Wheatstone, as some kind of compensation, is more complicated. This is because it is not clear whether the money was heading to Onslow anyway. For example, commenting in

	Project	Run by	Money From	Proposed start — end	Comments & status in July 2015
1	Ocean View Caravan Park	Shire	Shire stage 1 \$4.2m	Late 2014—early 2015	Tender for civics & construction in progress
2	Shire admin building	Shire	Shire \$4.7m (including insurance from fire) Chevron \$2 million	Early 2015-mid 2016	Tender for construction awarded
3	Town Centre improvements	Shire	Chevron \$3	Not determined	Yet to be planned
4	School: 3 transportable rooms	Dept Education	Chevron \$undisclosed	Not determined	
5	Swimming pool	Shire	Chevron \$7	Early 2016-mid 2017	Concept and broad specs stage
6 & 7	Skate park & basketball stadium	Shire	BHPB \$5m	Late 2015-mid 2016	Tenders called for BB courts, SP to follow
8	New hospital	WA Country Health Service	State Gov \$19.8 (R4R) + Chevron \$22m = \$41.8m	Late 2015 –early 2018	See story on page 9
9	Wastewater Bindi Bindi	LandCorp & Dept Housing	\$undisclosed	April 2014—early 2015	DONE :)
10	Onslow Ring Road	Main Roads	\$undisclosed	Mid 2015—late 2015	Underway
11	Groh Housing	Dept Housing	Govt land \$undisc. Chevron houses \$undisc	Mid 2015 –early 2016	Land appears ready, building not started.
12	Interim worker accommodation	Dept Housing	\$undisclosed	Completed early 2014	Completed
13	Waste management (Tip)	Shire	\$undisclosed	Early 2015—late 2017	Started but it hit flooding problems. Transfer Station completed. Ongoing study required for Waste Disposal Site
14	Barrarda Estate 220 lots	LandCorp	LandCorp \$undisclosed Chevron to buy 50 lots for \$undisclosed	April 2014—mid 2015	See story on page 14
15	Beadon Creek Marina	Dept Transport	\$20-30m	Not determined	No sign of action
16	New primary & high school	Dept Education	\$undisclosed	Not determined	
17	Wastewater plant upgrade	Water Corp	Chevron \$undisclosed	Late 2014 - late2015	??
18a	Water Supply Desal plant	Water Corp & Chevron des & build	Chevron \$undisclosed	Mid 2015—mid 2016	Not started yet
18b	Cane River Borefields Upgrade + 2 tanks	Water Corp	Stage 1 State Gov \$9.9m (R4R) Water Corp \$14.7 Chev \$undisc. (1 tank)	Mid 2014—mid 201	2 tanks installed, stage 1 done, stage 2 underway
19	Onslow Airport	Shire	Gov \$13m Chevron \$34m Shire \$5m = \$52m	Late 2013– early 2015	Operational but still work going on.
20	Light Industrial Area	Shire	\$undisclosed	To be determined	LandCorp is scoping
21	Onslow Road—upgrades	Main Roads	Chevron \$undisclosed	Phase 1 completed 2012 Phase 2 Mid 2017	Phase 2 is subject to monitoring for requirement
22	Old Onslow conservation	Shire > Pilbara Regional Council	Chevron \$1m	Mid 2015– late 2016	No sign of action yet
23	4 Mile Creek BBQ etc	Shire	Chevron \$0.245m	Completed 2013	The parking stumps are still bemusing.
24	Power Station/Desal	Chevron to build Horizon to run	Chevron \$undisclosed	Mid 2015—mid 2016	No sign of action yet

December 2014 on the \$19.8m State Government investment in the \$41.8m new Onslow hospital, Regional Development Minister Terry Redman said the hospital upgrade was part of the \$161m Royalties for Regions North West Health Initiative that is working to cater for expanding populations in the north of the State. He added that improvements to service delivery and health infrastructure aim to enable more patients to be treated regionally, creating community satisfaction and building sustainability in the region.

Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) president Geoff Herbert believes the Shire is mainly responsible for the slow rate of progress. "The problem with the Shire is that they have no external project management team," he complained.

"They handle these projects themselves and struggle to deliver things because they are inefficient. They don't have enough staff to deal with all the demands. Local government has so many levels of compliance to get through, it is slow."

Despite that concern, Mr Herbert expressed optimism about the direction the town is going in, and said the only pitfalls are that the local council is becoming "more of a basket case", and the expansion of the Light Industrial Area (LIA) is still needed.

Once a fierce critic of Chevron's lack of commitment to the Onslow community Mr Herbert said that recently Chevron's community liaison team had made real efforts to bridge the gap between the corporate and community reality of Chevron's business. He thought this may be due in part to OCCI's decision last year to hire a media consultant to apply pressure to Chevron and the State Government in the wake of the events of mid 2014.

He said: "They've got a big company out there, and now you can see what they are actually building, they're not here to solve all our social problems they are here to build that plant and process gas."

He explained that most of the anger directed at Chevron after it received approval from the Premier to build its worker accommodation near the plant rather than in town, had died down, and that

Chevron were now seen to be more on board with the community.

He said this was due to better consultation with local businesses. Now when a contract needs to be filled Chevron flies their three preferred tenderers to Onslow and "we have a big event down at the Business Hub, and all our businesses get to come with their capability statements and meet them and hit them up and tell them who they are. He said: "We're not asking for free kicks, we are just asking for access to those connections early on, to have a level playing field."

"where once the whole Wheatstone project appeared to be a massive failure for the town, it is now looking to be a massive success"

He continued: "What would happen before is the contractors would do all their pricing and hiring in Perth, then rock up here and see we have businesses like sign writing and building and plumbing here already, and they could have saved a fortune if they had known."

According to Mr Herbert, the West Pilbara Business Support Program, that Chevron sponsors, is so busy it just employed two new people to help local businesses build their capabilities. Membership of that program is now up to 116.

He said Chevron also sponsors the Industry Capability Network (ICN), which flew in an expert for a week to meet local businesses and prepare their profiles for listing on the ICN Onslow On-line Business Directory. The profiles were also distributed to the first-tier contractors on-site at Wheatstone.

Mr Herbert also praised the State Government. "The DSD has also come to the table for the first time ever and are working with us by sending tenders to us and referencing the Onslow ICN. So for that \$250m, from both levels, Onslow businesses are finally getting a fair go at it. The only one that lets us down is local government."

A spokesperson for Chevron told *Tracking Onslow* the company has a clear interest in ensuring Onslow remains a vibrant and sustainable regional community, based on the company's long-standing philosophy that fosters local partnerships to ensure delivery of sustainable outcomes.

Chevron has established an office in town, at 16

Second Ave, staffed by members of the community engagement team who work to update the community on the project and answer the questions and concerns.

Chevron said: “We continue to work with our contractors and local community and business stakeholders to ensure the Wheatstone workforce makes positive contribution to Onslow, including through participation in volunteering, recreational activities and patronage of local businesses.

“With our Wheatstone Project joint venture participants, we have committed more than \$250m to social and critical infrastructure projects in Onslow.”

Chevron now offers bus tours of the construction site, which provides an opportunity for people to see the Wheatstone Project for themselves. The tour is certainly an eye opener, and the massive reach and scope of construction is overwhelming yet impressive.

Mr Herbert believes that in a business sense, where once the whole Wheatstone project appeared to be a massive failure for the town, it is now looking to be a massive success.

Through the OCCI he is preparing a “lessons learnt”

business investment document to inform the rest of Australia about how business can operate smoothly with industry, in a circumstance like this.

He believes it is important to show that there is a success story amongst the negative press stifling the North-West and other mining regions in Australia.

“We are one of the very few towns that has a very bright future for the next ten years, and that needs to be talked up to inspire confidence, both for business and investment. There’s so much news about the end of the mining boom, but this region still needs investors to invest.”

Whether or not the Chevron and Government spend ends up equalling \$320m (which is \$70m + \$250m) will take some time to assess, as many of the projects have open ended dates and are dependent on future population growth and demand. Estimating the current population of Onslow to be about 1000 (see page 12) the \$250m represents a spend of about \$250,000 per resident. While it will be good if it happens, we wonder whether Chevron might have more easily won social licence to operate by simply writing them cheques.



Wheatstone mid 2015
Photo courtesy of Chevron

Greenhouse gas grey area

After a report about a lack of greenhouse gas regulation for some “big polluters” was published in The West Australian in January 2015, Labor MLA Chris Tallentire asked the WA Minister for Environment Albert Jacob in Parliament “why greenhouse gas conditions remain on Chevron’s Gorgon project but the government has waived them on Chevron’s Wheatstone project?”

On March 17, 2015, the Minister gave this answer, in Parliament: “Most greenhouse gas conditions were removed from Chevron’s Wheatstone project because the company requested that the conditions be removed in light of a complementarity clause in the conditions.

“The complementarity clause provided for the Minister for Environment to determine that the greenhouse gas conditions would no longer apply if it was found they were non-complementary to any Commonwealth legislation which regulated greenhouse gas emission.”

Mr Tallentire also asked: “What is the likely contribution of the Wheatstone project to Western Australia’s total emissions profile?”

Mr Jacob’s answer was: “At full development of 25 million tonnes per annum production of LNG, Greenhouse gas emissions from the Wheatstone Project are projected to be around 10Mt CO₂-e per year. ... Therefore emissions from the Wheatstone Project would constitute approximately 14 percent of total State emissions.”

We called Greens MLC for the Mining and Pastoral Region, Robin Chapple, for some background and clarification. He said that when the project first got the go ahead from the WA Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) that there was a requirement to monitor and report greenhouse gas emissions, but that it was exempted from these requirements by Mr

Jacob when the Rudd/Gillard Government’s Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) was passed in Federal Parliament because there was a clause in the agreement saying that Chevron would not have to report to two levels of government, and that the WA requirement could be dropped if a

Federal requirement was introduced. When the Abbott Government abolished the CPRS the Federal requirement disappeared but the state requirement has not yet been reactivated and so there is currently no project-specific requirement on

Chevron to report greenhouse gas emissions from Wheatstone. He added that WA’s greenhouse gas emissions were growing faster than anywhere else in the world. Mr Tallentire said: “It’s worse than that. The Barnett Government is refusing to place any greenhouse gas constraint on Wheatstone and I fear that they are going further and trying to extinguish EPA oversight of emissions on all WA resource projects.”

We asked Chevron if they are building into Wheatstone the capacity to measure and monitor greenhouse gas emissions and the answer was yes.

Calculating the emissions from the entirely diesel-powered, fully air-conditioned 4500 (and soon to be 9000) bed worker’s accommodation village would be an additional task, that would involve considering the litres of diesel being burnt.

“Most greenhouse gas conditions were removed from Chevron’s Wheatstone project because the company requested that the conditions be removed ...”

Chevron Q&A

Q. Is Wheatstone still on schedule ?

A. Construction is now approaching 60% complete. Over the next six months, Chevron Australia and its contractors will undertake hook-up and commissioning activities as the Project continues toward first gas in late 2016.

Excellent progress is being made on our upstream campaign with all nine development wells drilled to the top of the reservoir. Recently, the project made Chevron history with the largest single, integrated topsides float-over installation the company has ever completed. The platform topsides were installed onto a steel-gravity 225 km offshore the Ashburton North plant site.

We also continue to make good progress at the Ashburton North plant site, where dredging and piling activities are complete. The wharf is operational and at the Materials Offloading Facility, the breakwater is nearing completion and the 1.2-km product loading jetty continues to progress. Seven of 24 major process modules have been delivered to site. The roofs of LNG Tank 1 and Tank 2 are now raised and construction of the two condensate storage tanks is under way.



Q. Is Wheatstone hurting the turtles ?

A. In the first half of 2015, 37 environmental monitoring scopes were undertaken, including flat back turtle monitoring for both the Wheatstone Project and Thevenard Island. The areas monitored were Ashburton Delta beach, Ashburton Island beaches and Onslow back beach.

In addition, Chevron held a marine turtle workshop in Onslow for the community to learn more about the local turtle populations. Participants joined leading West Australian Turtle Specialist Dr David Waayers to discover more about the local marine turtle species and what can be done to protect them. The workshop included a presentation on turtle species in the Ashburton region, their habitats and ecology and an overview of the Wheatstone monitoring program. Participants also took part in identifying turtle tracks and nests.

Q. There have been recent allegations in the media that Chevron has engaged in tax evasion* activities. What does Chevron Australia have to say about the allegations?

A. Chevron has no further comment to make while this matter is subject to legal proceedings. Chevron abides by a stringent code of business ethics, under which we comply with all applicable laws and regulations in the countries in which we operate.

**These reports are following a lawsuit against Chevron in the Federal Court in which the Australian Tax Office is seeking to retrieve \$322 million with penalties. The case alleges that Chevron put a complex corporate structure in place in order to avoid paying \$258 million in tax between 2004 and 2008.*



Coping with FIFO life

Out on Chevron's multi-billion dollar gas plant everything looks super-sized. From the LNG tanks and the concrete blocks to the construction village with its football field, five gyms, four mess halls and swimming pool. The size and scale of Wheatstone dwarfs everything in the arid landscape around it.

When Chevron and Bechtel workers are bussed in from the airport, they are greeted by row after row after row of white containers – their homes for the next 28 days.

At first site, the Wheatstone accommodation village resembles a prison complex. We weren't the only ones to notice this. Checking in to Facebook on our way to Five Mile our location identified itself as "Wheatstone Prisoner Transfer Facility", clearly a joke, but one that makes a point.

However, a tour of the facilities in the 4500-bed village paints a different picture. Workers have access to a full football oval, cricket pitches and nets, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, fully equipped gymnasiums, movie theatres and a library. There is also a general store and four taverns.

FIFO is a well-established work practice in the resource industry, and often in remote areas, like the Pilbara, it is an essential part of the construction and operation of big projects.

When reports surfaced in the media in mid-2014 that nine FIFO workers had taken their own lives in the last 12 months, the State Government commissioned the Education and Health Standing Committee to investigate how FIFO work arrangements affected the mental health of workers in the resource industry.

The final report, released last month, found that FIFO workers suffered higher levels of mental distress than the general population, but that this was mainly due to the fact most workers came from

the highest risk demographic for mental illness and suicide, described in the report as male and aged 18 to 44. The report cites other recent studies that found that around 30% of FIFO workers reported mental distress, compared with 20% in the general population. The report recommended the

*FIFO workers
suffered higher
levels of
mental distress*

development of a Code of Practice to provide guidance on best practice to promote improved mental and emotional health and wellbeing among the FIFO workforces. A Chevron spokesperson said the company supported the statement made by the Chamber of Minerals and Energy WA

(CMEWA) about the issue, and that it is awaiting the Government's formal response to the Committee's findings. The CMEWA statement stressed that FIFO work was a matter of choice for employees; highlighted that there were already many codes of practice in place; and urged the government to base recommendations on quality research rather than "anecdotal and emotive evidence".

The Chevron spokesperson said the company places the highest priority on the health and safety of its workforce and has measures in place to promote and protect the wellbeing of all workers.



New hospital due date 2018



Onslow's hospital has weathered several decades, a few cyclones and good supply of patients. Officially opened in 1965 by MLC Graham MacKinnon, it's architecturally typical of its time — meaning asbestos-fibro sheeting was a major feature in its construction.

In December 2014 Premier Colin Barnett announced plans to build new a hospital with \$22 million from Chevron and \$19.8 Royalties for Regions. He said work was expected to start in 2016 and finish in 2018.

While this sounds like good news, locals can be forgiven for being sceptical about it.

It sounds a lot like the promise of around \$42m for a new hospital to be built between 2015 and 2018 that was published in Chevron's glossy brochure dated September 2013. Somewhere in between the two announcements the plan got a bit lost.

In early 2014, responding to rumours that the new hospital plan has been superseded by a plan to

expand the existing hospital, *Tracking Onslow* asked health minister Kim Hames what was happening. He said that plans were being readied but he couldn't give an estimated year that construction might start. The Department of State Development was also vague and said it was "finalising the scope and scale of the upgrades to Onslow's health services" but could say no more.

According to the December 2014 announcement, the new hospital will include an expanded emergency department, modern inpatient rooms, Telehealth video conferencing equipment, and a secure mental health assessment room. There will also be purpose-built space for consultation rooms, provided to encourage private medical services providers to set up practices.

The word in town is that the rethink, and reverting to Plan A, was prompted by the discovery of asbestos in the old building, but the WA Country Health Service, which is managing the project declined to comment on that. Folk at the pub have wondered how the asbestos could have been overlooked by anyone, given the age and style of the building.

Asked for an opinion on the hospital, local senior citizen Trevor Kempton sang the praises of the staff. He said: "They do their very best to look after us. My word, they're very, very good. The people who work there are brilliant."

Then he added that the facilities are out-dated and that: "Onslow deserves a good hospital, same as any town, and it's time the government got off their arse and built us one."



Population: whatever?

The last time the population of Onslow was officially counted was by the Federal Census in 2011. On that night there were 667 people in Onslow. While the next census won't be until 2016, some varying estimations have been made and so we asked the locals most likely to know what they thought.

Onslow Expansion Plan May 2012: "With a current residential population of approximately 700, Onslow is expected to welcome an additional 1500 residents by 2016 and more than **3300** into the future." According to the then Minister for Lands Brendan Grylls this plan was collaboratively created by the Shire of Ashburton, Pilbara Cities Office, LandCorp, Department of State Development, Department of Planning and Chevron.

Premier Colin Barnett. August 20, 2013, Parliament Budget Estimates (Hansard): "Onslow's population has grown from about 600 to **2000** people."

Premier Colin Barnett. December 9, 2014, media statement: "The population of Onslow is set to grow to almost **2000 by 2022**."

Chevron, September 2014, said, in a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Mental Health in the FIFO Workforce in WA. "... Onslow, which has a very small resident population of **around 700** people."

Vince Catania, July 25, 2014, media statement: "Currently home to a population of **approximately 700** people, Onslow is expected to welcome approximately **3300 residents by 2022** on the back of increased oil and gas activities in the region."

Onslow Local Emergency Management Committee (Draft) Evacuation Plan. April 2015: Onslow's population averages **around 880** people, reaching its peak during the southern winter when many people move to Onslow to escape the colder southern

Officer in Charge of the Onslow Police Station Sergeant Drew Taylor, was asked in June 2015, for the estimate of the population he worked with.

He said: "**About 700**, plus the FIFOs in town that would include 150 or so at Discovery Park. That's not including the 4900 out at ANSIA."

Postmaster Gerard Carroll handles the incoming and outgoing mail for the town. In June 2015 we asked him how many people he thought lived in Onslow. He said: "The permanent population is **between about 900 and 1000**. That's not counting the 4500 at ANSIA." He added that he'd been told that the ANSIA population was set to rise to 9000.

ABS Onslow 2011: 667 people. Male 352 and female 315.

Median age 39. Families 155, with 1.9 children each.

548 private dwellings. 1.8 motor vehicles per dwelling.

Median weekly household income: \$1466

Median monthly mortgage repayments: \$1858

Median weekly rent: \$65

Also where is the Ashburton North Strategic Industrial Area?

Vince Catania, June 18, 2015: "Chevron has proposed to accommodate workers **28km** from Onslow, a **30 minute** bus ride."

Minister for Lands Terry Redman, August 18, 2014: "ANSIA, located approximately **12km** south west of Onslow, and 2km northeast of the Ashburton River."

Premier Colin Barnett, Aug 21, 2014: "The thought of staying in temporary worker

accommodation in Onslow and a **45 minute to one hour drive** before and after a shift is hardly good for safety."

The varying distances and times may have something to do with whether you measure by road or as the crow flies, and the speed of driving, as some Wheatstone vehicles are capped at 80km per hour. The LNG plant is also a few km further down the road than the workers' accommodation village.

Police on the DISCO beat

Sergeant Drew Taylor has been Officer in charge at the Onslow Police Station since October 2013, and what he's most proud of, so far, is the work he and his crew have done with the kids in town.

Back in 2012 we asked the then Officer in Charge Jeremy Coulson what the biggest crime problem was in Onslow, and he said theft, mainly by juveniles.

Midway through 2015 Sgt Taylor said that while theft was still statistically the biggest problem, his team's work was showing results. Every term the police run a Blue Light Disco for the kids and the officers build on the budding relationships by kicking footballs around the ovals after their shifts are over, mingling and encouraging healthy, lawful behaviour.

He said: "A year and a half ago we had kids breaking into cars. We haven't seen that kind of thing for months now."

While he described Onslow as a quiet place without major problems, he noted that the station's stats for drug-related offences were climbing, up from about nine charges per year a few years ago to over 35 in the last 12 months. He said that while cannabis was still the most common drug, in terms of possession charges, meth/ice offences were on the rise, as were charges for possession of steroids.

Asked about the predicted population boom he said that while there was talk when he took up his



Sgt Drew Taylor

position in 2013 that there may be dramatic change and his crew of six may double in size, the talk hasn't translated into anything of substance.

He also said that while the plans before council for a bigger and better police station, proposed for a site near the MPC, were a good idea, he thought it may be a few years before he and his team were moving boxes across town, from their current site near the caravan park. He said: "The proposed site is better because it's close to the other emergency services and above the cyclone flood level, and the offices will be better than these."

Sgt Taylor is handling about 20 prosecutions a month, alternating on a monthly basis between working via video link with the travelling court and hosting them in town.

He said that while licensed premises are always a site of potential activity for police, the town was calming down.

He said there used to be a long list of people banned from the pub and Sports Club, but the number was down to three. He also reported that fears that the flood of young men into town would boost rates of sexual assault were unfounded with no increase in reports over the past few years.

He noted that the station's drug-related offences were climbing, up from about nine charges per year a few years ago to over 35 in the last 12 months.



Onslow's Dust Bowl

Lot 6 Scully Road on the new Barrarda Estate is for sale on www.realestate.com.au for \$285,000. It's not alone. In mid July, 10 of the 220 Barrarda Estate lots were listed, along with a score of other blocks, houses and apartments, making a total of 34 properties. The big question hanging over Onslow is whether anyone will buy them.

Barrarda Estate is a new suburb of the tiny town. The 220 lots of what used to be crown land are the first large scale residential land release in the region for 20 years. The land release was prompted by an expectation that Chevron would house its permanent workforce in Onslow, but when that plan changed in late 2014 LandCorp was left with the land on its hands.

Chevron has committed to buying 50 lots to house permanent workers who want to live in town, and potentially their families. Chevron is developing one multiple dwelling site that will become Government Regional Officers Housing (GROH), and Onslow Salt is buying five to develop for workforce accommodation. That leaves 164 still to sell.

Postmaster Gerard Carroll said that the process of preparing the lots had caused problems. He said: "All the people living round about got sick of shovelling

dust from their front steps and a fair few of them have sold up and moved out."

Aboriginal elder Margaret Parker, who is chairperson of the Bindi Bindi community that is right across the road, also called it a "bloody dust bowl" and added: "How can they build something there on a sacred site—a Bindi Bindi sacred site. We've been yelling and screaming at them to do something, but they can't even put a fence around it. It's all bare now, only one tree left. It's a sacred site. If people want to muck around there they'll find a lot of trouble."

Shire CEO Neil Hartley explained saying: "You have to disturb the soil to build a subdivision, and there were high winds and low rainfall that created problems. With the arrogance of hindsight we can say that it could have been done better. There was more dust than residents were satisfied with but

LandCorp has addressed the problems and there is now a permanent suppressant on the ground. It's a fantastic development that suffered some difficulties along the way, but it is great to have it there."

LandCorp's answer was that: "dust is a collective issue from various development sites and sand dunes", and that "LandCorp has applied a variety of dust mitigation techniques to help reduce dust and sand movement from its sites and will continue to do so in the future."

Asked about reports of flooding that had the site's drains overflowing, Landcorp said: "This was from a recent cyclone and not under normal weather conditions. Sections of the site are being reviewed to avoid similar issues in the future, should extreme weather conditions strike again."

Despite these difficulties, the lots now have power, water, footpaths, street lighting and drainage and are on the market for between \$195,000 and \$285,000. Stage 1A is currently for sale with stages 1B and 1C to be released in the future.

According to realestate.com.au metrics (based on the number of page-views per listing), demand for property in Onslow is low. With the average WA listings getting seven page-views for each one that an Onslow property gets.

Long-time Onslow resident Joseph Freeman confided that the locals had nicknamed the new two storey apartment block at 41 Second Avenue the "eyesore of Onslow". He doubts they'll sell as the developer is asking "for nearly half a million dollars for something no bigger than a donga."

Gerard agreed, saying: "There are a lot of developers getting their fingers burnt. When Chevron came to town properties that were worth

\$400,000 were selling for \$1 million and rents went from \$250-350 a week to \$3000 and so people invested, but there is not a hope in hell that the prices will stay that high."

According to realestate.com.au the average weekly rent for a three bedroom property is now \$1300 and for

four bedrooms it's \$1890. There is variety and optimism in the market though with a new 4-bed 'executive' house at 34A Third Avenue for sale for \$1.2 million and also asking for \$2400 a week in rent.

Ray White is the only real estate agency with a permanent presence in Onslow, it's been there for seven years and now manages over 120 properties in town, so it knows the market fairly well.

Ray White Onslow Director, Tim Grose, whose name and number is on numerous signs around

"It's a fantastic development that suffered some difficulties along the way, but it's great to have it there"

town, said he sold around 35 properties in Onslow in 2013, only about 5 in 2014 and that 2015 was looking to be about the same. He said: "I've had a couple of sales in the last few months, but enquiry is still fairly low."

He is doing better with rental properties and said he had leased out 35 in the last two months and that he was optimistic that when the rental properties now available were taken up, that demand could start to return to the sales market as people moving to town may look to buy instead.

Asked if he thought prices would drop, he said: "Prices have already adjusted downward from where they were a few years ago, but what will happen from here? That's a hard question."

Asked what the impact of the Barrarda land release was on property prices he said he didn't see it as relevant, as anyone buying land would still have to build, and building in the region is expensive. He said, if anything, it would prompt people to think that buying an existing house was a better deal.

Shire president Kerry White said it was sad to see so many empty apartments in town and that it was tragic that investors had been frightened off. She said: "We need them back and we need retail."

She said "we're on the cusp" of a new era, "and we just need another boost". She added; "Surely we can entice people to live here." Asked about employment in town, she said: "We have Salt, the





“There are a lot of developers getting their fingers burnt.”

Chevron supply base and the airport, and we are strategically well placed to support the Gorgon gas projects.”

A sticking point for businesses wanting to come to town though is the lack of land available in the Light Industrial Area.

According to Tim, industrial property, has been a contentious issue for a while. He said several years ago it was the most sought after real estate in town, but unfortunately new supply was not made available and so many businesses that wanted to set up in Onslow had to look elsewhere.

He said: “It is very hard to know about the current demand right now as I assume it would be a lot riskier for a company to justify purchasing based on where the Wheatstone project currently is, as well as future market uncertainty and the cost and time associated with such a commitment.”

Despite this uncertainty the Shire and LandCorp are currently conducting an analysis of available industrial land in town with an eye to preparing a release of industrial lots.

Neil said: “This is early stage work and it’s one thing to have land available and another to have it ready for sale.” He estimated it could take 12 months to finalise planning approvals and rezoning, and to achieve the desired number of pre-sales to support a business case. He added that the first step was to determine demand by calling for Expressions of Interest, he said once the scope for the call out was established, it would be advertised for approximately eight weeks.

What will happen is an unknown as Tim said: “The companies that were interested a few years ago may have already invested in other alternatives, such as Exmouth or Karratha, and so that window may have closed for now.”



Between idea and reality

In our late 2014 edition we published the conceptual design plan for the new shire office, created by architecture company Gresley Abas, which was selected after submissions by four firms. The company came to Onslow, consulted and created a design they said “responded to the signals Onslow was giving, both in the meeting and from the impression you get of being in town ... this is not something that will look very new and modern. It’s not aggressively contemporary.”

With \$9.5million allocated to the project, the next stage was commissioning a Detailed Design Scope. In April, the Shire councillors voted unanimously to give the go ahead to Woollam Constructions’ \$6.7 million tender to build something inspired by the crystalline nature of salt. Woollam was one of eight companies that tendered for the ‘design and build’, and it has offered the shire the option of having the brickwork painted, rather than exposed.



Margaret Parker

Bindi Bindi Blues

Buurabalayji Thalanyji Aboriginal Corporation represents the recognised Traditional Owners of around 11,120sqkm of the West Pilbara, which includes land around Onslow. The corporation's 11-year battle with the State culminated in the signing of numerous Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) with various mining companies and pastoralists.

Through these agreements, Thalanyji people party to the corporation have enjoyed great financial rewards. For the non-Thalanyji aboriginals, however, there have been limited benefits, even though most of the elders from all the families in town are related in some way. According to a number of long-term Onslow residents, the inequity of the situation is causing discontent in the wider community.

The Bindi Bindi community in Onslow is an Aboriginal Lands Trust administered, former Native Reserve. When the Pastoral Award was introduced in 1968, pastoralists were deemed to be employers and had to provide indigenous people working their stations with wages and accommodation. Many could not afford to do this and so Aboriginal people were forced off their traditional lands and moved to government-established camps, like Bindi Bindi. At last count, Aboriginal people constitute over 37% of Onslow's total population.

Margaret Parker is the Chairperson of the soon to be incorporated Onslow Bindi Bindi Aboriginal

Corporation. She has lived in Bindi since it was the old Reserve, back in the late 1960s.

"We used to live in tents," Margaret said, "and there was one ablution block for everyone, before they made us tin houses. We came to Bindi, all our parents and grandparents from off the stations, we were forced to because there were no more jobs, the station masters wouldn't pay the award rates."

Onslow resident Trevor Kempton was one of the local pastoralists at the time and he recalls driving the Aboriginal workers from Mt Minnie station into town on the back of a ute because his family "just couldn't afford to pay them" the award rates the government had mandated.

Margaret is a director of the Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, and she said that most people in Bindi were Gumala Aboriginal Corporation (GAC) members. She added that there were a few in the community who were Thalanyji, but most of the Thalanyji had moved to Perth where their main office is now located. Casting her eye over the busy REFAP men's work crew, Margaret said it was good to see

work being done. REFAP stands for Real Jobs for Aboriginal People and it is the name of a Karratha-based company that won federal RJCP funding to run employment and training programs. "REFAP is fixing up the gazebo over there," Margaret explained adding that after a young man hung himself from one of the beams supporting the roof, the community had wanted a ceiling installed to conceal them.

REFAP currently lease the office building and workshop in the heart of the Bindi site from the AAC, and Margaret would like the money to flow back into Bindi, to fix the ablution block and build basketball courts. But there are limitations to what REFAP and AAC can do so the Bindi community has been asking Chevron and other mining companies to help.

Illustrating a growing awareness that not all Indigenous people in Onslow are benefitting from its ILUA with Thalanyji, Chevron has commissioned consultant Graham Barrett to find out what's happening. He has held senior positions involving designing strategies for the WA Department of Indigenous Affairs, Office of Crime Prevention and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

As Graham wandered past her neighbour's porch, Margaret remarked on her meeting with him the day before. "He came around to see how Chevron can help this community and we said we don't want another report to be filed away in a cabinet; we want actions. If they are not talking actions and it's just another report, then we don't want to know them ... That's what some companies have done in the past, they don't care as long as they've got their report".

Shire of Ashburton President Kerry White is sceptical of Chevron's motives: "Bindi Bindi is native title free, and it's not Chevron's place to look into their backyard. I had to beg them [Chevron] to give us \$5000 a year for a Christmas party down there. Kerry said Chevron failed to understand that Bindi Bindi is a community within a community, and it gives the people a sense of pride to have their own Christmas party to celebrate as a community.

Margaret said the community was overcrowded. "There are 24 houses here, but they are getting a bit crowded now, most of them have two lots of families living in them at the moment. ... We really need single person units here, to get some of the men out of the households and away from families," she said.

Margaret said the houses had power that was accessible only by cards, and all houses were now connected to the town's water and wastewater systems. The Wastewater Management Bindi Bindi project is item Number 9 on the Department of State Development list of 24 projects, that is delivering new facilities in Onslow.

The project was overseen by LandCorp and the Department of Housing and involved closing the old treatment ponds and connecting the sewerage system to the town services. The project started in April 2014 and was completed in early 2015.

"There are 24 houses here, but they are getting a bit crowded now, most of them have two lots of families living in them."

Maintenance of the houses in Bindi Bindi is facilitated by Pilbara Meta Maya Regional Aboriginal Corporation (PMMRAC), a Port Hedland based provider of the Remote Area Essential Services Program (RAESP) for Aboriginal communities in the Pilbara, Gascoyne and Murchison regions. PMMRAC is responsible for servicing and maintaining power generation, water and

wastewater infrastructures, and provides housing and property management services to 190 houses in 13 remote communities.

Margaret said it had been quite a process to report faults; first they had to ring PMMRAC, who in turn rang the Department of Housing, who then rang the local contractors who fixed the problem.

Donna Kereopa from PMMRAC said as of July 1, 2015, the company is using a new model. "We go down there [Bindi Bindi] to see what's required and report it through the Department of Housing and they give the work to Pindan, who then engage contractors to do the work. Donna believes the changes will have no impact on Bindi Bindi households.

Margaret's brother-in-law Patrick Tiddums joined

us at the table, and Margaret told him to tell his story. She told Patrick it was for the newest *Tracking Onslow* magazine, and the normally reserved man let out a bellowing laugh and exclaimed: “Hey, you get stories off people don't you”, adding that he didn't really understand what the project was about. Margaret explained that the magazines actually showed changes. “Look at this”, she said, laying out three editions of *Tracking Onslow* on the table. “Look at how you can see the changes from this one to that one. And now she's doing another report, which is where your story should come in.”

Patrick was born up the hill, at the Onslow Hospital. Until recently he was working on the Onslow Airport, but he's been unemployed for two weeks now, which he said was unusual for him. Prior to that job he spent seven years in the laboratory at Onslow Salt, and prior to that he worked as an environmental and aboriginal health worker for the WA Health Department.

Despite the amount of work underway in town, Patrick said he is finding it hard to secure a job. “For some of us, who can't read and write well, it is a headache to apply for jobs because there's so many issues to face. And when you do apply for these companies around here, you won't hear from them for two or three months, if at all, and you can't track the status of your application,” he complained.

Margaret said many people in Bindi have attended Thalanyji training courses and have extensive experience in a wide range of activities, but they just get certificates, not job offers, because the jobs are only available to Thalanyji people. She fears that the Bindi participants are being used simply to make up the numbers, so the training can go ahead to



Patrick Tiddums

accommodate the Thalanyji participants. In the last training program delivered by the Thalanyji, the three Thalanyji participants secured jobs in industry, but the seven from Bindi did not.

For Margaret, this is the biggest disappointment: “Our people here are well trained, they have all the same certificates, but never get the opportunity to even get a foot in the door anywhere in this town.”

Patrick added that the other day he took a couple of young guys up to the new Barrarda Estate that overlooked the community to try and score some labouring work with Ertech but was told to contact the local Thalanyji representative.

Margaret said that although Thalanyji are the declared native title holders in the Onslow area, they did not own the Bindi Bindi community. “They are entitled to sign off with any mining company as the registered Traditional Owners but none of the mining royalties come back to the Bindi Bindi community. Thalanyji is separate to Bindi, and some people here feel they don't want to know us. We are a low-income community here, but some people are coming here who have more resources and are getting housed, but they don't help the community.”

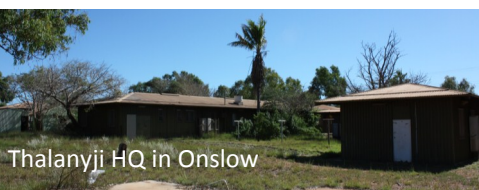
Margaret believes cooperation could create change for the better. “The kids are the ones we need

“In the last training program ... the three Thalanyji participants secured jobs in industry, but the seven from Bindi did not.”

“Thalanyji is separate to Bindi, and some people here feel they don't want to know us.”

to teach, to lay the foundations for their future ... A lot of our kids don't go to school, or they drop out completely, so where are they going to get an education to help them in life? We all need to talk with them and support each other because it's only going to get harder for them, with all the new drugs and alcohol that could bog them down later in life.”

Despite numerous visits to the Corporation's headquarters in Onslow, *Tracking Onslow* was un-



Thalanyji HQ in Onslow

able to establish contact with Thalanyji representatives in town. Buurabalayji Thalanyji Aboriginal

Corporation CEO Tim Milsom said as he did not live in Onslow, he could not comment on anything concerning the town. “I can't comment because I don't know anything,” Mr Milsom declared.

Margaret describes Bindi as usually a quiet place to live, but said that when events like birthday parties or funerals were on, the community “rocked”.

She added: “But we have new by-laws coming into effect on July 17, so music, partying and fighting will be cut down. The police are coming in regularly now on their patrol, talking to anyone who waves them down, and taking stereos. But they never pull up and yarn with us, or say how are you going to us, they just drive around.”

Dodging the closure bullet

The Federal Government announced in 2014 it would no longer fund essential services for remote Aboriginal communities, as living there was simply a “lifestyle choice”. The WA Premier responded by declaring his government would subsequently close up to 150 of the state's 274 remote communities, as it could no longer meet the costs on its own. Even though Aboriginal Affairs Minister Peter Collier promised Aboriginal people they would be properly consulted before any decisions were made, the communities in the firing line remain unsure of their futures.

Down in Bindi Bindi, Margaret Parker and Patrick Tiddums said that when they heard about the closures, they were scared “It was in the back of our minds, that they'd take our houses away,” Patrick said. Margaret said the fear came creeping in; “I was scared, in the back of my mind, so we got ready to start fighting here.” Adding: “I would have had all the people lined up ready.”

Shire president Kerry White said the Bindi Bindi community was not in danger of closure, but it is still a “forgotten place”. According to Kerry the Shire has six indigenous communities who all get limited service: “These communities don't pay rates so the shire don't fix their roads or do the footpaths, it just

picks up the rubbish ... the other councillors are not in favour of putting any rate money in there because of no rate money coming out. These people have been abandoned, totally abandoned, by the government.”

The Pilbara has long been neglected by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA), and the Director General of the DAA admits they still do not have a single person responsible for communities in the whole of the Pilbara region.

In May the State Government announced major reforms to service delivery to Aboriginal communities.

Premier Colin Barnett said despite the billions spent on their welfare there was little improvement evident in Aboriginal people's lives. “It is not the Government's intention to force people off their land or to prevent them having access to country but it is essential that Aboriginal children are safe and are going to school.”

According to the DAA there are approximately 12,000 Aboriginal people living in 274 communities in Western Australia. While WA's Aboriginal agencies receive \$4.9 billion each year in state and federal funding, the State Government has promised to increase this by using Royalties for Regions funding.

REFAP in action

Project manager Paula Prior runs the Real Jobs For Aboriginal People (REFAP) program based in the centre of the Bindi Bindi community in Onslow.

But she is adamant she is only in the position until a suitable local replacement is found or becomes ready to take on the role. “We have one of the best teams here, everyone is committed to what they are doing and the fact that they are all local really helps,” she said.

REFAP provides job-oriented training and focuses on getting people into work, and creating business opportunities. It is supported by funding granted through the Federal Regional Jobs and Communities Programme (RJCP).

Paula’s philosophy is that it is important to create opportunities the people actually want to participate in, rather than just forcing people to into same old cleaning and gardening activities. As a result the Bindi Bindi program now involves arts, food preparation, carpentry and bicycle mechanics.

“The men are doing artefact making, they’ve got all the tools for that, so they will make things like boomerangs and fishing spears, and we have silk-screening to make tea towels and clothing. This will directly create a business for the people, and empower them,” Paula said, adding; “you have to address barriers to employment. REFAP has a policy to try and help people push through these barriers. We don’t leave anyone behind here, we look after everyone, not in a paternalistic way but very much in a mentoring process.”



When *Tracking Onslow* visited the community, the men’s work team was busy redeveloping the community’s main square. In the workshop, children’s bicycles were lined up to be serviced or repaired. Paula explained that the children can only bring their bikes in to be fixed if they attend school. The workshop crew also restores old bikes for children who don’t own one, as long as they too attend school.

She added that the children come into the office after school to do painting and drawing, and they have no hesitation in grabbing the tape off her desk and proudly plastering their artwork on the walls.

While Paula said REFAP is continually speaking with the major companies like Chevron and Bechtel, she admits they are still working toward securing employment for local participants with those companies. She stressed though, that not everyone wanted to work at Wheatstone, doing the 12 hour shift, as many had family matters to consider.

“It’s not for us to say I’ll pick you up, we want to give them the tools to learn how to pick themselves up,” Paula said.

Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation Director and RJCP participant Rocky Wedge said as a community elder he felt it was important that he worked, to set an example and encourage the younger people to develop a sense of pride in their community.

“not everyone wanted to work at Wheatstone, doing the 12 hour shift, as many had family matters to consider”

In your words

Kerry White feels like Onslow has entered a new phase in its evolution. She was furious late last year when the State Government allowed Chevron to renege on its agreement to build homes for its 255 permanent employees in town.

There was even talk of sending a delegation to the US to take it up with Chevron HQ, but instead the shire employed political lobbyist Megan Anwell to work on improving the shire's relationship with the multinational giant.

As a result, Kerry said, things are flowing much more smoothly and the benefits of having Wheatstone on its doorstep were about to blossom.

She said people will start to feel more positive about it all when they see things starting to change, with construction due to start soon on the new shire building, the pool and the skate park. She said that the recent Passion of the Pilbara festival weekend, funded by Chevron in conjunction with several local businesses, was the sort of event that lifted people's spirits.

Reflecting on the town sentiment, she said that it had been a difficult time for Onslow since the disruptions of 2013. She said: "When we got back [from suspension] we had to focus on the airport and

it's taken time to get through the planning and proper procedures for the 20 or so big projects they had on the go. She said that some of the people in town who were critical of the

Shire didn't properly understand the relationship between elected councillors and the council staff, and the reasons projects were held up. She said the skate park was a good example because two different petitions about its location had been received by council, and they had to be dealt with properly before a decision on the site could be made.

Kerry is confident that within two years Onslow will feel like it's changing for the better, and she hopes that within four years it will have settled into a new groove, as a popular tourist destination and an industrious town, with a resident population of around 1200.



Dawn McAullay, has been in Onslow for 65 years and in that time she's made many friends. While she misses those who have passed on or moved away, she still describes Onslow as "a good place to live, where everyone seems to be happy".

She said that the boom had enabled many friends to sell their Onslow properties and buy for less in other towns: "They have made their money and gone and I can understand why they did it; to set up nest eggs."

She is less sure about the future of Onslow, but isn't opposed to change happening.

Asked what she'd like to see, she said she would "dearly love" the Shire of Ashburton's administration office to move back to Onslow "where it should be", or at least for there to be a senior staff member based in Onslow. The Shire's admin office was located in Onslow from 1972 to 1990 when it moved to Tom Price, and in recent years many staff members who were based in Onslow have also moved. Dawn said: "When there was a shire person here, you could go to her when you wanted something. Now everything has to go through Tom Price. Onslow should be a town in its own right, not just an offshoot of Tom Price."



Postmaster Gerard Carroll is over the whole Wheatstone thing. His main gripe is that Chevron promised that they would make it work for the local businesses, but in Gerry's words: "They lied."

He said now 60 to 70% of my business is handling mail that goes to ANSIA, and the theory in the postal business is that you don't get paid for delivery, but it balances out because the people you deliver to then spend money in your post office on postal products and services. But, he says, Chevron and Bechtel don't do that. "They source 100% of their postage products from Perth, or through ESS Thalanyji, so I get nothing back. All they pay for is one \$30 locked bag per annum. So imagine how I feel when they say they are going to increase the number of people at ANSIA from 4500 to 9000."

Gerard explains that when he challenged the US-based corporate giants about their earlier promise to buy locally they responded that by 'local' they meant Australian, not local meaning from Onslow. He said: "They have egg on their face from so many broken promises. That's why they employ so many spin doctors."

He described Chevron as a "poor corporate citizen" who were "all spin at the start and since they got the government approvals they just go and do whatever they want."

He said the community was promised that the number of people living at ANSIA would be capped and that the overspill would come to town, but that wasn't happening. He was also critical of Premier Colin Barnett's lack of consultation with the local community over his 2014 decision to allow the Chevron permanent workforce to be housed at the industrial estate rather than in town.

In contrast, he said that the Japanese owners of Onslow Salt were supporting the community by building houses in town.

Gerard's other major concern is the impact of the gas hubs on tourism in Onslow. He said: "As soon as industry comes to town it kills tourism. We haven't had a good tourism season here since this all started about four years ago." He said the locals asked Chevron for a meeting to express their concerns



*"They have
egg on their face from
so many broken promises.
It's why they employ so
many spin doctors."*

about the impact on tourism and were promised a meeting date in November, but it was postponed and no replacement date had been offered.

He said: "That's just the sort of thing they do. They don't seem to understand how this affects us."

"As a local retailer the tourist season was our cream. We would have thousands of people come through who would buy souvenirs and papers from us and food and fuel from the other retailers and that has just gone and it hasn't been replaced by Chevron people, because they don't buy those things here. They don't care that it has hit us hard."

In your words



When Mechelle Macdonald's husband got a job with Onslow Salt two years ago, she and their three children moved to town with him. Their six and seven-and-a-half year olds are now going to Onslow Primary School and the four year old is in kindy two days a week.

As well as working at the tourist bureau in town, Mechelle is an active member of the school community and gets involved in decisions being made.

She said "it's a good school overall "and she likes that the kids all know each other and the teachers know the families so it's very supportive.

She said that as a family they are thinking of staying for as long as the children are in primary school, but that it's up in the air what will happen after that.

Their indecision is linked to the uncertainty about what the future holds for the town. Asked for her predictions about Onslow in 2020, she said: "I see it as still being fairly small because I don't think there's enough here to push it to being a larger town. Wheatstone is only in construction mode, and as it moves to production the number of people in town will drop and they'll be a lot of empty rooms."

Sam Rigg is Chevron's new Wheatstone Community Engagement Advisor. He is based in the Wheatstone office in town and his mission is to keep Onslow residents and other stakeholders up-to-date on the Project, Chevron's social infrastructure activities, community programs and interactions. He is also charged with managing any local concerns and aims to build trust and to be seen as approachable.

His wife Jemma and three children moved to Onslow in January to join him. He said: "From a personal perspective we are enjoying being part of the community. Jemma volunteers at the Community Garden. I'm involved with junior sports and my children are constantly hosting new friends or on play-dates with other families. Weekends you can find us (and dog) at back beach and we also take several trips to explore the wider region." Sam also manages Chevron's local long-term partnerships and small grants programs, including a new two-year partnership with the Shire of Ashburton that supports activities and events in Onslow, including the recent *Passion of the Pilbara* festival, Onslow Keepers (for over 55s), Anzac Day celebrations, and school holiday activities.



Graeme and Jenny Whitmore were initially disappointed with Chevron for making promises that didn't seem to be being kept. Jenny recalled: "They said we would be able to fly out on Chevron planes but that never eventuated and it felt like we were being played with."

"They called meetings and they said those things and then months later they almost seemed to deny that they'd said them, but we were there and we heard them." Graeme added: "There was a sense that you couldn't trust them and we've had to wait for the proof of the pudding."

He added that he feels that things are changing now with Chevron, but that it is because they have been forced to change, not because they wanted to.

He continued: "I'm not so sure about the State Government though, and whether they are looking after the interests of the state or their own positions. The couple said that of all the things that had happened in Onslow over the last few years Royalties For Regions had made the biggest difference. "We saw things happening with that, things improved."

The Whitmores came to Onslow in 2000 and noticed a need for new housing, so they invested in a few properties. Jenny said people had come to town for a number of reasons and there just weren't enough houses for them. People were living in sheds and caravans and so we saw the opportunity and developed a couple of properties.



"we've had to wait for the proof of the pudding."

Their investment paid off in the boom and in 2013 they leased out their three properties and travelled the world on the rental income they generated.

They had long wanted to travel more to explore their passion for jewellery-making and the Onslow property boom gave them the opportunity to do that.

Reflecting on their good fortune they said: "Other people had the same opportunity but didn't take it up." They have recently moved back to town and look forward to seeing what will happen next.



Geoff Herbert's pet hate is the 12-hour shift. "It has ruined the whole of the North West", he said. "You used to have people out camping and exploring and enjoying living up here. Now its just work and sleep." He said that even the salt company's four days on, four days off rosters knocked people out of being able to commit to sports or community activities that happen one night per week.

Despite that, he's still loving life in Onslow. His charter boat business has shifted its focus from tourism to industry, but it still gets him out on the water. He said: "In three days last week I saw about 50 big turtles and had four dugongs swimming around the boat. It's world-class and just beautiful, and there's lots of new families in town enjoying it."

As president of the Chamber of Commerce he has been working hard to make sure that Onslow businesses and the community reap some benefit from the development of Wheatstone. He said that while a year or so ago it was looking like an enormous failure, its now shaping up to be an enormous success story with collaboration between most stakeholders working well, since local businesses have been supported to develop the skills and resources they need to get a slice of the action at Wheatstone.

In your words



Joseph Freeman has taken the tour bus trip to Wheatstone three times and says it's worth taking a look at how unbelievably huge it is.

He said that living in Onslow, where everything is quiet, that it's hard to believe there are thousands of people just down the road, building something so big.

He said that there were fewer workers in town now than there were a year or so ago: "It's no more sea of flouros in the shops, emptying the shelves and beep beep beep from their cars backing up."

Asked if it had changed the community he said: "Not really. It's still a nice community of friends, even though some have moved out." He knows someone who sold one house here and for the price they got bought two in Kalbarri.

He's appreciative of Facebook as a way to stay in touch with them and added that the Town of Onslow Facebook page was a good way to hear about things happening in town, and to sometimes have a say about things.

Joseph also likes the face to face chats that happen as he works in the community garden, and his own garden patch in the seniors units. He said: "There's great people here. That's why I love it."

Stacey Ahuriri was offered the job of managing the Sports Centre bar the day she arrived in Onslow. She came to town, three weeks ago when her husband's job at Onslow Salt become a permanent position. She appreciated the way Onslow Salt flew her and her daughter up to check out the town before they made the commitment to move, and she's glad that her daughter, her partner and their six-year-old son moved to Onslow too. She said: "Before this move my husband and I were both working FIFO and sometimes, because of our rotations we missed each other and that was really hard." Stacey was assistant bar manager at Murrin Murrin and so the members of the Sports Club committee who also work at Onslow Salt were keen to recruit her.

While she hasn't been in town long enough to comment on the changes, she said her impression so far is that Onslow is a lovely friendly town, her grandson "absolutely loves" pre-primary and she's loving living with her husband again in a place with a lot more freedom than a mine site.





John Morris keeps Onslow caffeinated, and his services to the sanity of the town extend further than that. He has created a little oasis of a garden beside the museum, where you can sit in the shade, enjoy some radio tunes, admire his drift wood furniture and savour a good coffee.

John is not the first to attempt to make it as a roadside coffee vendor in town, but his point of difference is his edict that sometimes “less is more”. He said: “I don’t have big overheads or staff to pay. It’s just me and just this: coffee, biscuits and toasties. There’s not much variety but that means there’s not much waste and not much to clean up.”

Uncle John’s Café all packs up into minivan that can be found parked on the main street between 6am and noon seven days a week. John spends his afternoons “conserving energy”, pottering around in his garden and enjoying the ocean view from his cottage in the shire’s seniors units.

He has lived in Onslow for five years and in that time he’s worked at the pub, at the school and for the shire. Originally from New Zealand he spent much of his life in the Caribbean, but came to Onslow because it’s a nice community with nice weather.

Asked what motivated him to become a coffee entrepreneur, he laughed and said: “At my age you have to create your own employment, no one will hire you.”

Asked if he had opinions about the changes in town he politely declined to answer saying that as a coffee vendor he couldn’t take sides, because he serves everyone.

Bonnie Palermo has been in town for 16 years. She used to run the Hardware store for Kerry White and also worked at the old supermarket. She has seen the changes in town, but thinks that progress is too slow, and the town is too expensive.

“You need a bank loan to go shopping at the supermarket now, that’s why so many go to Karratha to shop,” Bonnie exclaimed.

Nowadays Bonnie runs a catering business from the kitchen at the back of the Sports Club. She has been trying to secure work at Wheatstone with ESS Thalanyji for months, but with no success.

Her husband, a carpenter, has also been applying for work at Wheatstone, but can’t get a look in. Bonnie said that while Chevron hosted plenty of events and functions, these did not help the town. “These companies used to have these functions at the Sports Club, but that stopped long ago.” She added: “All the money is leaving town, and things get more expensive.” Bonnie believes this year’s tourist season has been good, but nothing like it used to be. She appreciates the grey nomads who visit at this time of year, and said “they are the lifeblood of the town.”



In your words



Rodney Butler is better known as Yuddy. When he comes to Onslow it's mostly to visit his folks, Trevor and Doris Parker. They are the leaseholders and managers of Peedermulla Station, north east of the town, and live there with a few households of family members.

Peedermulla used to run sheep and cattle but these days it only has a few thousand head of cattle and the old shearing sheds have been converted into a training facility, complete with kitchens and sleeping quarters.

The renovation was done by the Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, which has federal funding to provide vocational training programs.

Yuddy said that rather than staying for the Peedermulla muster, he was on his way to Carnarvon for a funeral and to spend time with his young relatives. While he spent his young life on the station with his parents, he calls the Gascoyne home because he went to school there and lived with his grandmother.

Since leaving school he has worked on mines looking for gold, diamonds, iron ore, zinc and gas. He said: "I've also driven trucks and worked on stations. It's never hard getting a job up here."

Asked if the gas hubs have changed things for the better or worse in Onslow, Yuddy said: "It doesn't really affect us out there, except for the prices of buying things in town." With a grin, he added: "We just go to Pannawonica now, because things are cheaper there."

His final word is that "things are doing all right here."

Flic Brennan describes her Wheatstone sentiment as “beyond grumpy”. She said: “My care factor has gone out the window and I can’t wait to leave.”

She has rented the premises that she used to run Trick Electricks from to another sparky firm and said she’s just doing a bit of gardening work while she waits for the property to sell, so she can leave town.

Flic has lived in Onslow for more than 20 years and when the big companies first came to town she joined the Community Reference Groups (CRGs) for both Macedon and Wheatstone to provide the kind of community input they said they were looking for.

She said that she recently quit the Wheatstone CRG because she was getting stuck in the middle of political arguments between local identities and was being harassed/lobbied to take positions on issues.

She said: “I got into the group just for myself, because I was interested in what was happening, and it just got too intense as the personalities clashed so I got out of it, and now I don’t know what’s going on.

“My view is that as it all got out of control Chevron were just sitting back and laughing at ‘these idiots’. If we had worked together instead of against each other we could have done so much better out of this, but instead the community was divided.”

While she is still a member of the Macedon CRG, she said there hasn’t been a meeting for months, as the April meeting was cancelled and no contact has been made since. She said that she really has no complaint about BHPB’s dealings with town, except that like the other locals, she finds their speed-restricted vehicles that can only go 80kph on the 110kph road out of town pretty frustrating to be stuck behind.

She also doesn’t like the 12 hour shifts on the Macedon rosters because they prevent the workers from getting involved in community life. She said that as far as she knows there’s only one who makes time to get involved.

Asked what she thinks about the real estate situation, she said. “It is the investors and real estate agents who have caused all this shit; the two-and-a-half-grand-a-week-rents; the stupid new developments and the result will be the total collapse of the town.



“...we could have done so much better out of this, but instead the community was divided.”

She said that there had been a number of projects that could have been handled better. For example, the new Barrarda Estate has been completely flooded out twice since the land was cleared and that the residents along the road facing it have been complaining about the constant dust blowing from the cleared land. She said the loose dirt had been sprayed with dust suppressant but it hasn’t made much difference.

In your words

Trevor Kempton is a living local history book. His dad was five years old in 1914 when he travelled with his Mum, Dad and 10 siblings on a horse and cart from Mt Magnet, where he was born, to Old Onslow. Trevor's grandfather bought 14 or so camels and ran a transport business hauling goods from the port to the station homesteads. In 1926 they traded the camels for trucks and Trevor's dad Les and Uncle Joe took over the business.

Trevor was born in 1947 in Carnarvon and moved around the Pilbara with his family, living for three years near the Kooline lead mine and for two years in Wittenoom, where the family befriended the Hancocks and his mum sometimes looked after little Gina. Aged 19 Trevor moved with his family to Mt Minnie Station near Onslow where they ran 7000 sheep. Trevor said: "It was not an easy life out there, we always struggled and struggled bloody hard too." During these years he learnt to speak Nhulama, so he could talk to the Indigenous workers in their own lingo.

He remembers the days (up until the 1990s) when the pub was segregated into black and white bars, and before then when the Indigenous folk weren't even allowed into the pub or to be in town after dark.

He also recalls with horror hearing stories of people "going out to the bush to get one to do some work and chaining him to the veranda overnight, so he wouldn't run away."

His dad died in the 1970s and

Trevor sold the station and moved to Carnarvon. Having driven over 18 million km over many years as a truck driver, worked on Barrow Island on and off for seven years, and worked in a range of jobs for "a big heap" of companies, Trevor is now retired. He lives in the seniors units and loves being in the same town as some of the people he went to primary school with. He always kept his connection with Onslow, coming back for race days and rodeos. His opinion of Wheatstone is that "it's for the better, bringing money and people to the town."



Rocky Wedge was busy angle grinding when we approached him, but was happy to stop for a chat. Rocky is a Nhuluma man from Roebourne who married a local girl and has lived in Bindi Bindi for 30 odd years. While Rocky doesn't mind the changes that are happening in town, he fears the developers are building their apartments for nothing, as most of them sit empty. He also doesn't like the look of the new Barrarda Estate on the hill opposite Bindi Bindi.

Asked about LandCorp's claim that Barrarda was the Thalanyji word for 'nest', Rocky laughed: "That's the first time I've heard that." Turning to a colleague, a Thalanyji man, Rocky repeated the claim. "Never heard of that word either," the man replied.

Rocky explained that everyone in the community was connected in one way or another. He said; "all us old people, we all get on together. Those boys and girls who are Thalanyji are all my cousins". When he is not working, Rocky likes to get out on country and hunt and fish. He said his favourite dish was fried goanna on hot damper, washed down with a steaming hot cup of tea. For Rocky, the community at Bindi Bindi maintained its strength and cohesiveness by practicing their law and culture faithfully every year up at the Cane River. He appreciates the knowledge passed on to him by the old people, and wants pass it down to the young people. "Us four old fella's here," Rocky declared; "we want those young ones to learn what we learnt, to keep our culture strong."

\$11m spruce up for the pub

The transformation of Onslow's pub, The Beadon Bay Hotel, is underway. The iconic 91-year-old building was sold for \$5 million in September to the Complete Group, (a company possibly best known for supplying porta-loos and other onsite services). Complete Group managing Director Emmanuel Dillon is committed to spending \$11 million to restore the existing building and add additional rooms, a beer garden and a bottle shop.

In early July 2015 he said the work was on track for completion before Christmas, with the only cost blow-outs, so far, involving Horizon Power and Water Corp.

Before knocking out walls and re-orienting the bar Emmanuel called in TPG, a heritage consulting firm, and he said "everything they suggested we adopted in full." The elements that were removed, such as the main bar, were not part of the original building, and the old photos and curious signs that give the pub its local character will stay.

Despite the chaos of staying open for business during renovations, he said turnover from the venue had increased 30-35% since they took over, simply because they had adopted a policy of providing more of what people want.

This has included opening earlier and serving breakfasts, having a barista on site to make coffee and opening seven days a week. The hotel is also now operating the licensed café at the airport, that will provide another revenue stream. Back in town the bar staff wear shirts advising customers to "Not go home empty handed" promoting the pub's takeaway wine and food options, another luxury that's new to Onslow. The pub is also still offering the beer and TAB services that it's always

been popular for, with some folk in town. With regards to the impact of Wheatstone, Emmanuel said it was good for business because workers came in to town for a steak sandwich and a beer when they could, and that it was giving work to other local businesses, such as plumbers and electricians.

In terms of his own business prospects his eyes are on the future development of Onslow as a tourism destination. He said: "It's a beautiful place. All it needs is a bit of polish. "



Destination Onslow

In early July 2015 there were several vacant lots the Ocean View Caravan Park in town and only one van at the idyllic Five Mile camping spot on the banks of the Ashburton River. Several of the people we spoke to said that the tourism season was clearly underway, but that it was “not what it used to be”.

Despite this, construction of new rooms and a beachfront restaurant at the Ashburton Resort is in full swing. The nearby pub will soon have 80 rooms, and the Mackerel Islands will emerge from its Wheatstone accommodation contract in a year or so with a refurbish and a marketing campaign.

With direct-from-Perth Virgin flights just starting up there's a buzz of optimism in some quarters about the future of tourism in town.

The people funding these projects are predicting that the planes will open up Onslow to a whole new kind of tourist, keen to fly in for a few days to marvel at the wonders that have been inaccessible, to all except those with time for the long drive.

Emmanuel Dillon, who has invested \$16 million in the Beadon Bay Hotel, said: “Onslow is under-developed. It's been stuck in a corner, and now there is an airport, it is just begging for tourism.”

Once that happens, he's hoping that it will make it on to the tour bus itinerary as well. He said: “Derby gets around 50 busloads of tourists per year and they all spend money in town. Onslow could have that too.”

Ashburton Resort is also investing in Onslow's tourism potential. It will soon have two

restaurants and its accommodation is designed as a resort, although much of it is currently housing workers.

Discovery Parks is taking a more flexible approach. Located close to Beadon Creek, its business is workforce-oriented. It has 24 powered sites and capacity for 400 guests in a combination of permanent and transportable rooms. It is currently home to 350 or so Wheatstone workers. Looking to the post-construction era, Assistant GM John Neeson said: “Our approach is to be pragmatic and responsive. The property is configured so that when workforce accommodation declines and tourism rebounds, it can be set up for tourism in a short period of time.”

He said the transportable rooms could be sold or sub-let and some single rooms could be combined to create luxury suites. Explaining their approach, he said that if tourism is going to match the workforce accommodation market, something needs to be done to draw an audience to the town.

Geoff Herbert from the Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry agreed and said that “while tourism is part of puzzle, it's not a big part”, mostly because it's confined by the weather to a six or seven month season. He's also not completely confident that

the town can rally to collaboratively answer the question “What will tourists do here?”

Having run a dive boat charter in Onslow for four years, he has felt the pain of being all set up with no one willing to pay for the service.

Years ago there were eight charter boat operators in town, who all left when



Beadon Creek was requisitioned for industrial use. Most of them are now operating out of Exmouth, which is further from the Mackerel and Montebello Islands, hence the expectation that they'll return when they can; especially if and when the proposed new \$20+ million 12-boat recreational marina is built. However as the new tourists will have already shelled out for airfares and accommodation, cost may limit business.

There's potential for activities like kayaking and paddle-boarding to be made available but someone needs to take the initiative and the financial risk.

Other tourism activities we heard mooted include tours of Onslow Salt, similar to the one Chevron is now operating to Wheatstone on Sundays; skirmish parks; an indigenous cultural experience; and the Goodshed Museum is already in place, and it's digitising its collection and sprucing up its displays.

These activities could also attract more 'grey nomads' who, due to Onslow's relative inaccessibility are the kind of tourists the town is most familiar with. Shire President Kerry White recalls the days when the townsfolk would entertain tourists with games of bowls and sing-alongs at the sports club.

But Geoff is not so sure about their net value to Onslow. He said they stock up on food before coming, only buy bread, milk and fuel and block up the hospital queues while they are here.

The three we spoke to were a little scathing about the town. Gary Assay said: "It's a 160km round trip to get here, there's not much here except salt, not much to see ... and honestly it's just a waste of time." Having said that, they did fuel up and buy food.

Geoff expressed more enthusiasm about a younger demographic of 4WD tourists who were driving around and renting rooms. He said they tended to still be working and therefore to have income to spend on restaurant meals and fishing charters.

Ashburton Resort's Mark Waiss is also eyeing this demographic and has signed up to be the AVIS car hire agent in town with 4WDs available for people who want to fly-up and then go exploring. Emmanuel Dillon added that he's keen to play a part in getting tourism going in town. He hopes to work collaboratively rather than competitively to put Onslow on WA's tourism agenda. He said: "It needs everyone to be on the same page and to want tourists, in order to develop a sustainable industry."



Previous page: Fine dining at Discovery Parks, restaurant construction and resort facilities at Ashburton Resort.

Above: A lone van at 5 mile. Below: Robert and Lorraine Brown and Gary Assay at the Ocean View Caravan Park.





Stacks of sports

There's never been as many different sporting activities available for adults and kids in Onslow as there are now.

That's not to say that there's a huge uptake of the opportunities, but there's optimism and signs that that Onslow is getting sportier.

Cam McGurk is one of the key players driving Onslow's energetic sporting agenda. He is the Onslow Sports Club's community sports coordinator. It's a volunteer role that keeps him very busy.

He runs badminton on Monday nights, indoor soccer on Tuesday nights, footy on Wednesday nights, mixed netball on Thursday nights and has a rest on Fridays.

He said: "Numbers are pretty low, getting 10 to 12 people down there is a good night but we have fun and it's always a social competition."

His efforts are supplemented by Leonie Stanley, who runs the tennis, Denise Wright who runs yoga and Melissa Ayres who runs a women's fitness group.

Bruce Strahan, president of the Onslow Sports Club is another local sporting legend. He described Cam as a "top bloke doing a terrific job".

Bruce loves his role because the club channels money into activities that nurture Onslow's sense of community and do good deeds.

He said: "Just recently we've given \$1000 to the blue light disco, \$1000 to the school P&C, \$1000 to the tourist bureau and \$5000 to the rodeo."

The way it works is that money spent over the bar at the not-for-profit Sports Club is used firstly to sustain the club activities, and all the rest is distributed to groups the committee deems worthy.

The only paid positions are the bar staff. The bar is open on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays and it can be booked for functions and meetings.

Bruce also runs darts and bowls at the club for folks looking for a less athletic social game.

The kids in town are also being treated to more sporting options than ever before.

Sarah Wright from the V Swans program invited us to join the Youth Sports fruit circle while we were in town and we heard firsthand how popular the program is with Onslow's youngsters.

V Swans has been in Onslow for about 5 years. It is a not-for-profit organisation, under the auspices of Swan District Football Club, that operates in a few Pilbara towns and in Perth. It is also a Chevron partner, and Sarah and her colleague Sean Walker work from an office in the Onslow Primary School, that provides them with direct access to the students to conduct their 'active education' programs.

Sarah explained that V Swans is about more than





Photos -Top left (clockwise):

1. Keenan Tucker, Kai James and Saxon Dawe at Youth Sports. **Top Right:** 2.

Shooting Goal High School Program with front Runner coaches. **Bottom left:** 3. The Sports Club with the Passion of the Pilbara turtle sand sculpture in front of it.

Bottom centre: 4. Jet Kids FMS Program. **Bottom Right:**

5. The soon to be replaced basketball court. **Photos 1, 2 and 5 are by Sarah Wright.**

just sport. Each Youth Sports event starts with a fruit circle where the kids are invited to relax, enjoy some healthy food and connect with each other. Then they warm up and play, taking on board as they do the V Swans values of respect, perseverance and resilience. She said: "These are things that can be embedded in any sport, whether it has a football, tennis ball or basketball." To keep interest high they rotate the sports on offer regularly, and usually get 20 to 40 kids turning up to take part. In Sarah's words: "Onslow is a big basketball town, but we do anything and everything we can, if the kids want to play it, we'll have a go and see who rocks up."

Sarah said the Jet Kids Fundamental Movement Skills program for younger children also had a deeper layer, being based on research that shows that kids who develop balance and coordination early do better in all aspects of life.

She said the addition of a physical education teacher to the primary school staff had also made a big difference and that over time V Swans had been able to shift from being just about sports to being about developing the values and active education.

Sarah is also very proud of Taylor Brett, a year

11 high school student now employed by V Swans to assist with the Youth Sports program. Through the V Swans Shooting Goals program Taylor is earning a Certificate 2 in Sport and Recreation while she's still at school.

V Swans also runs Friday Night Lights an after sundown basketball game for kids in town that attracts a lively group of players.

Onslow has also had an impressive line-up of visiting cricket, football, soccer, tennis and running athletes and coaches come to town to help adults and kids develop their skills.

Travis Gaspar runs the Thalanyji Inspired Living Program that operates in Onslow, Mullewa, Geraldton, Yalgoo, Leonora and Laverton. It brings sport and artistic mentors to town once a month and also runs the NAIDOC week footy carnival.

Like Sarah, Cam is optimistic that it's all heading in the right direction. He said: "I've been here nine years and this is the most sport there's ever been. Word is slowly getting out there that these things are happening, so the participation rates are not really a reflection of the community being unwilling. We just need to advertise it a bit better to boost numbers."



Last words



When we started writing *Tracking Onslow* in 2012 the locals said it had to be a printed mag because the internet in Onslow was too slow to be useful. Since then, Onslow has embraced Facebook in a big way. Demelza Franklin runs *Town of Onslow, WA*, which has 608 likers and the *For Sale in Onslow* closed group with 992 members, the OCCI page has 328 likers, and Shire councillor Peter Foster runs the *Onslow Discussion Board* Closed Group, which has 453 members. Geoff Herbert said the online debate gets a bit feral at times but it's good for issues to be aired.

It was great to see paintings by local artist Stephanie Percy for sale in the petrol station, but why aren't they all over the tourist bureau and resorts? Her distinctive works are something tourists can't get in other towns.

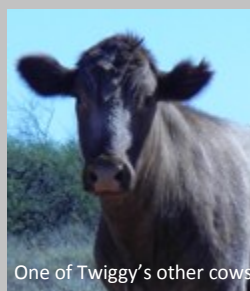


Sue Lennard and Fiona Dent are using a program called Mosaic to create a digital record of the collection of 782 artefacts in the Good Shed Museum. Their work is largely voluntary but assisted by a Chevron Grant.

Plans to get a Enduro off-road motorcycle sports club fully functioning and making good use of the old horse racing track fell over when the key people driving it left town a little while ago.



Andrew "Twiggy" Forrest is raising a new range of Ultra Black Angus bulls at Minderoo Station for the Australian fine dining market. Chef Neil Perry from Rockpool has Forrest's beef on his menu. Conflating iron and protein, he said: "The spinifex grass on the property has a high protein value and the cattle feed on it. That's why we call it 'iron grass-fed beef'. It's grown on ancient land, with no one ever spraying chemicals up there." According to the Department of Agriculture, there are two main kinds of spinifex in the West Pilbara; 'soft' which is palatable only when young and has a low grazing value (with protein levels up to 9%, similar to hay); and 'hard' which has little or no pastoral value, as not even its seedlings are palatable. Twiggy's cattle probably also get to chow down on the produce of the bright green irrigated circle that can be seen from the air as you fly into town, but it doesn't sound so cool in a menu spiel.



One of Twiggy's other cows

For the past few years we've been hearing rumours that the old power station building is about to be converted into a youth centre, but this year no one said anything about it. It seems to have been pushed onto a backburner for while.





Thank you Onslow

for sharing your stories,

for publication in editions 1-6 of Tracking Onslow.

This is the last edition, but you can read more at

www.trackingonslow.com

All six editions are available online

<http://trackingonslow.com/the-magazine/>



This Tracking Onslow magazine
was produced by
Edith Cowan University
ECU CRICOS IPC 00279B

